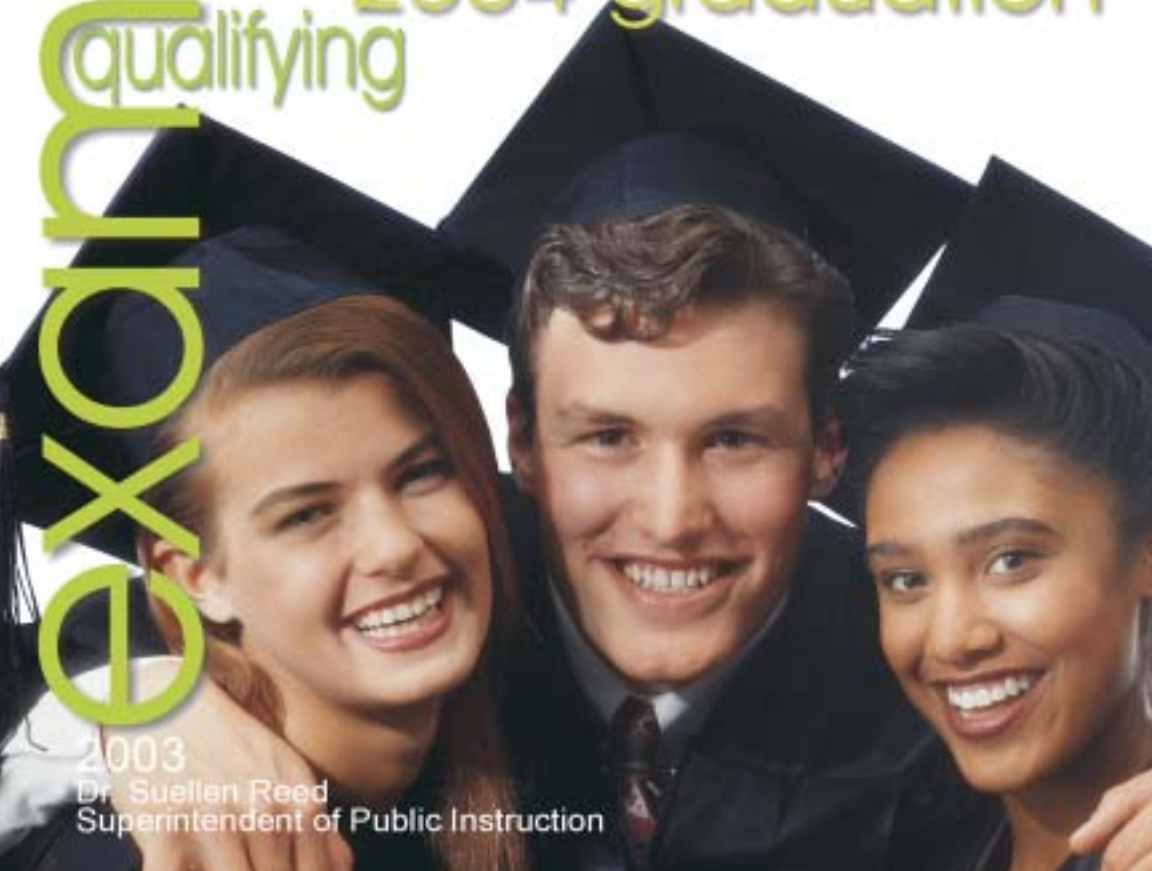
Class of 2007 Students & Parents: 2003's Freshmen (and students that follow) will face tougher standards on Indiana's 2004 graduation qualifying exam



2003
Dr. Suellen Reed
Superintendent of Public Instruction

It's a new era of testing in Indiana.

In Fall 2003, ISTEP+ will be given to students in Grades 3 through 10. For the first time, Grade 9 students will take ISTEP+ in English/language arts and mathematics. The Grade 9 test measures K - 8 Academic Standards in English/language arts and mathematics.

Students . . . do your best on the test and pay close attention to the Individual Student Report you will receive that will indicate whether you passed or failed the test. The test takes on added importance in Fall 2003. Members of the Class of 2007 will be the first required to meet new and higher standards on the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) as sophomores in Fall 2004. Classes that follow also will need to meet these higher standards.

Members of the Class of 2007 will take the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) for the first time in 2004 on September 21, 22, and 23. In 2004 and years that follow the GQE will test Grade 9 English/language arts standards, K - 8 mathematics standards, and Algebra I standards.

Indiana high school graduates must meet the GQE requirement in addition to earning the credits required to qualify for an Indiana high school diploma. Members of the Class of 2007 already have faced tougher standards on the Fall 2002 Grade 8 Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+). It is critical that students be prepared to reach the higher standards, especially in mathematics. Students should take Algebra I no later than their freshmen year.

The GQE was added to state law in 1992 by the Indiana General Assembly as a response to concerns expressed by parents, employers, and the higher education community. These groups saw that some graduates were leaving high school and entering the workforce and postsecondary education without the skills necessary to succeed. Meeting the GQE standard will help ensure that your son or daughter has mastered essential skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.

The Emphasis Is on Success

Hoosier students deserve a quality education—one that will give them the skills necessary to compete successfully in an increasingly demanding world. Identifying students who need help in reading, writing, and mathematics is an important task.

By taking the GQE for the first time in the fall of their sophomore year, students who need help with basic skills and their abilities to apply these skills can be identified while there is still time to provide them with the instructional assistance they need. Students will have at least four additional opportunities to pass the test, two times each in Grades 11 and 12.

Better Evaluation Leads to Better Education

The GQE is designed to test basic and applied skills through the use of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay responses to questions and the solving of mathematical problems. By using real-life applications and asking students to show how they arrived at answers, the test results demonstrate what students know and are able to do in English/language arts and mathematics.

Indiana's GQE is a continuation of the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) program with which you and your son or daughter are familiar. The GQE consists of two sections: English/language arts and mathematics. Your son or daughter will receive separate scores on each section. Scores will reflect a student's knowledge of the subject and his or her ability to apply that knowledge. This combination of basic and applied skills makes the assessment meaningful, accurate, and timely. It also distinguishes the Indiana GQE from many of the basic skills tests used in other states.

A Winning Combination

Parents . . . Indiana's high school GQE will play an important role in helping to ensure that your son or daughter receives an education that prepares him or her to face the future, but the GQE is only one piece of the equation. A quality education is a combination of many things, including skillful teaching, student interaction, attendance, academic coursework, accurate and timely evaluation, remediation, communication, and parental involvement.

It is important that you are involved in your son or daughter's education. Make sure your son or daughter understands what is expected.

What you and your son or daughter should know about the "new" Grade 10 Graduation Qualifying Exam

When is the GQE taken?
The GQE will be taken in the fall of your son or daughter's sophomore year (Grade 10). The ISTEP+ testing "window" always opens the second week following Labor Day. The GQE is given during the first week of the testing "window" on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, September 21, 22, and 23, 2004, for the Class of 2007.

When will the results be available?
Test results will be provided to schools as soon as possible during the first semester.

What are the subjects covered in the GQE?
The GQE covers basic and applied skills, including reading ability, reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing skills, number sense, geometry, measurement, problem solving, algebra, and reasoning. In English, Grade 9 Academic Standards are tested. In mathematics, K - 8 math standards and Algebra I standards are tested.

What are Indiana's Academic Standards and how were they developed?
Indiana's Academic Standards contain specific knowledge and skills that have been identified as necessary for students to know and be able to do to succeed throughout their K - 12 experience, in higher education, and in the workplace. The Academic Standards were adopted by the Indiana State Board of Education after study and consideration by a group of teachers, parents, business and community leaders, administrators, and students.

Academic standards define the skills and knowledge that a student should have, and the things that he or she should know in each subject, at each grade level.

How are tests graded?
Tests are graded by college graduates, many of whom have advanced degrees and teaching licenses. All are trained in scoring. The scoring takes place in Indiana and follows strict scoring rules. Scores are based on correct answers as

well as content, level of understanding of questions, and ability to communicate answers.

What is the score needed to pass the GQE?

Mastery of the Indiana Academic Standards in English/language arts and mathematics is required to pass the test. The passing score is set by the Indiana State Board of Education, based upon recommendations by English/language arts and math teachers.

How can a student prepare for the test?

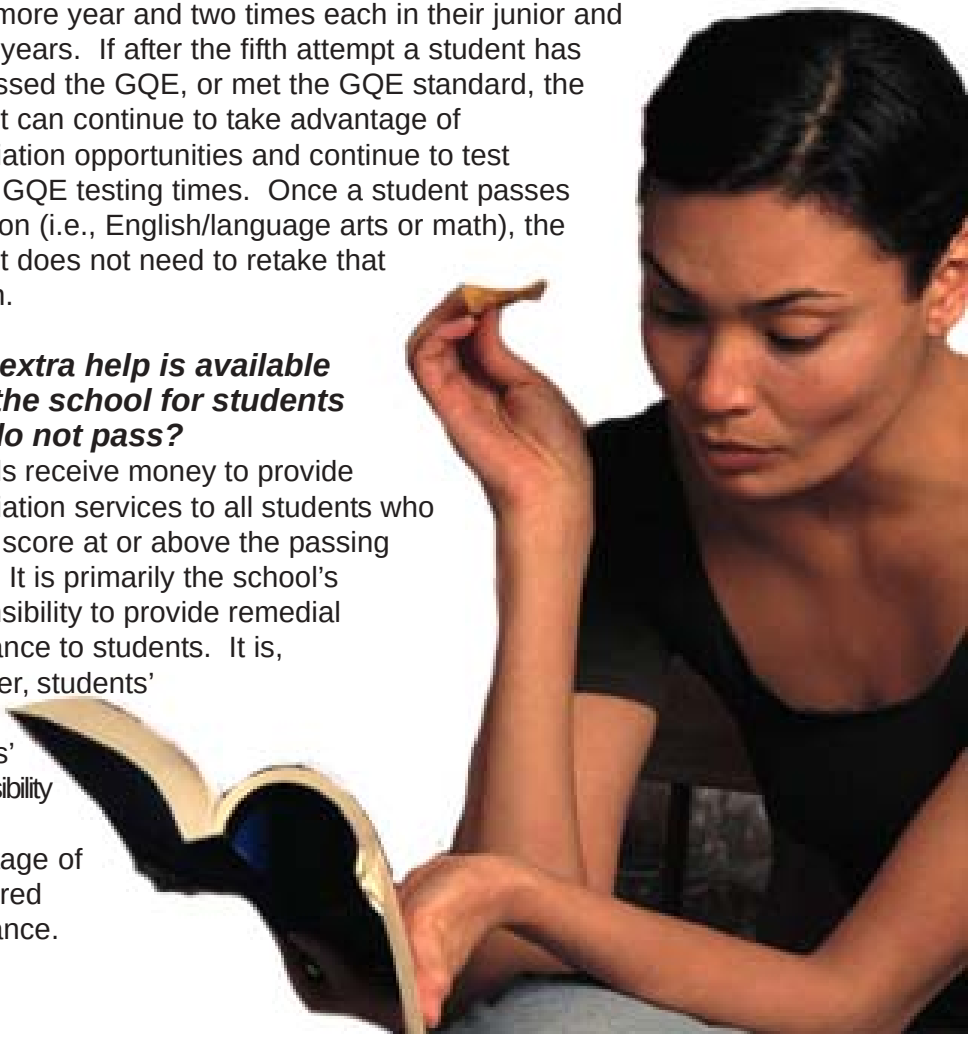
Students can best prepare for ISTEP+ or any test by keeping current with their schoolwork. Parents should attend parent-teacher conferences and be aware of how their son or daughter is doing in each course.

Does a student get only one chance to pass?

No. The door never closes on a student's opportunity to earn an Indiana high school diploma. Students have the opportunity to take the GQE one time in their sophomore year and two times each in their junior and senior years. If after the fifth attempt a student has not passed the GQE, or met the GQE standard, the student can continue to take advantage of remediation opportunities and continue to test during GQE testing times. Once a student passes a section (i.e., English/language arts or math), the student does not need to retake that section.

What extra help is available from the school for students who do not pass?

Schools receive money to provide remediation services to all students who do not score at or above the passing score. It is primarily the school's responsibility to provide remedial assistance to students. It is, however, students' and parents' responsibility to take advantage of all offered assistance.



When a student passes the GQE, does the student still need to meet other requirements in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma?

Yes. Meeting the GQE standard is only one requirement a student must meet in order to be eligible for an Indiana high school diploma. A student must complete all other state and local requirements in order to receive a diploma. If you have questions about the state and local requirements necessary to earn a diploma, please contact your high school guidance counselor.

What if a student earns enough credits to graduate, but does not pass the GQE?

State law provides that a student may graduate without passing the GQE if all of the following have occurred:

The student must have -

- taken the GQE in the subject area or subject areas in which the student did not achieve a passing score at least one time every school year during his or her sophomore, junior, and senior years in high school;
- completed remediation opportunities provided by the school;
- maintained a high school attendance rate of 95 percent with excused absences not counted against the student's attendance;
- maintained a "C" average in the courses that make up the 24 credits specifically required for graduation (language arts, science, social

studies, mathematics, technology, health and safety, and basic physical education); and

- obtained a written recommendation supporting the request for the appeal from the student's teacher(s) in the subject area(s) in which the student has not achieved a passing score.

The recommendation must be agreed to by the principal of the school, and be supported by documentation that the student has attained the academic standard in the subject area, based upon tests other than the GQE or classroom work. In addition, a student must have satisfied all other state and local graduation requirements.

Note: A student who receives special education services must have the written recommendation of the case conference committee supporting the request for the alternate documentation from his or her teacher of record, in consultation with the teacher(s) in the subject area(s) in which the student has not achieved a passing score on the GQE. In addition, the student's case conference committee makes the decision concerning how frequently a student retakes the GQE and how often a student completes remediation.

What if a student completes Core 40, but does not pass the GQE?

Completing Core 40 with a "C" or better in all directed and elective Core 40 courses along with the written recommendation of the student's high school principal is the third way to meet the GQE requirement. However, students who plan to complete Core 40 must take the GQE as sophomores and must take retests as needed.

Core 40 is the high school curriculum that helps prepare students for college. Core 40 consists of a single, flexible high school curriculum that, except for electives, is based on a single set of agreed-upon competencies. These competencies direct the content of both college prep and tech prep courses. The difference between college prep and tech prep courses is not in content, but rather in the instructional and learning approaches taken in the classroom. Core 40 includes a series of academically challenging courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. A student also must complete directed electives selected from foreign language, art, computer, or career area.

What if my son or daughter is enrolled in special education?

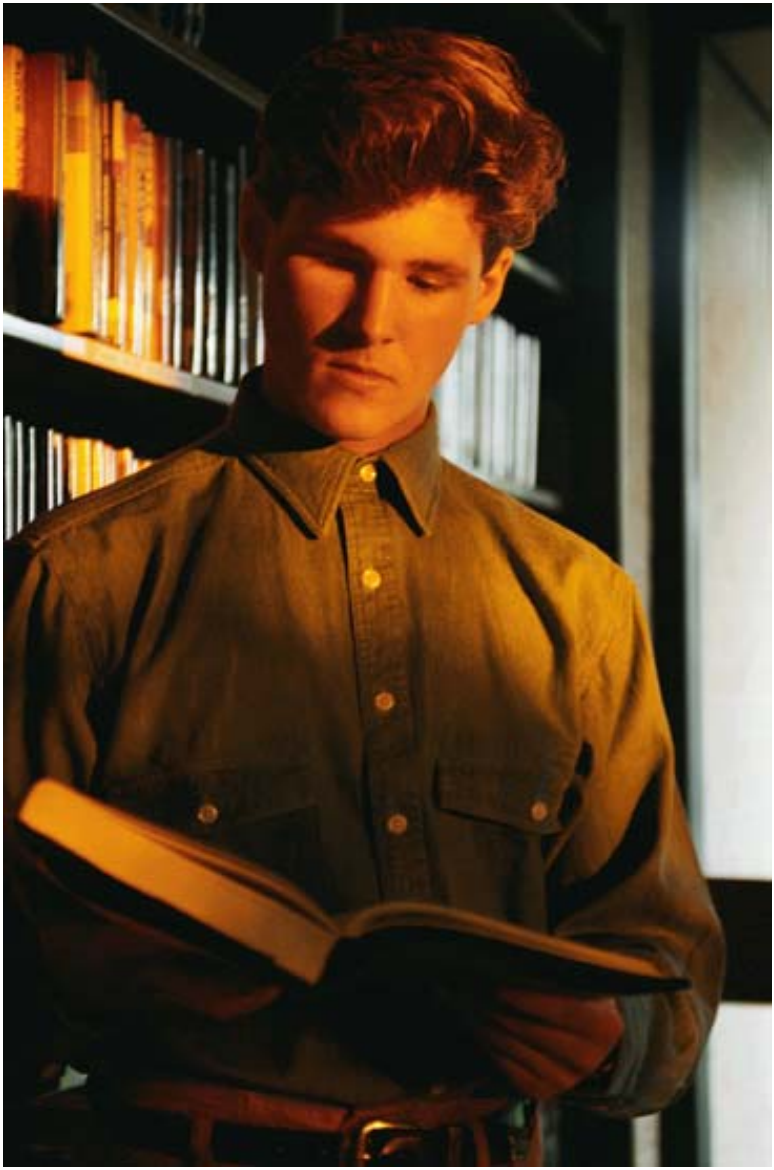
All students are required to demonstrate that they have met the achievement standards measured by the GQE in order to graduate. If your son or daughter receives instructional or testing accommodations, these should be specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. Many of these accommodations are allowed during ISTEP+ testing. (Reading comprehension portions of the test cannot be read to the student.)

If a student's case conference committee determines that the GQE is not an appropriate test for a student, then the student should participate in an alternate

assessment. Participating in an alternate assessment does not qualify a student for meeting the GQE requirement necessary to receive a diploma.

The Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR) is the alternate assessment component in Indiana's statewide system of accountability. ISTAR is the culmination of previous state assessment projects, blending the best work into a single, unified alternate assessment. ISTAR is a web-based, standards-referenced assessment system designed and provided by the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners.

It is available free of charge to all educators in accredited schools throughout Indiana. Contact your son or daughter's school for more information or go to < http://doe.state.in.us/exceptional/speced/whatsnew.html >.



Indiana's
Academic Standards
Tested Fall 2004 on the GQE

English/language arts and mathematics

English/Language Arts Standards for the 2004 GQE Testing (Class of 2007)

Standard 1: READING: Word recognition, fluency, and vocabulary development

Standard 2: READING: Comprehension (focus on informational materials)

Standard 3: READING: Literary response and analysis

Standard 4: WRITING: Process

Standard 5: WRITING: Applications (different types of writing and their characteristics

Standard 6: WRITING: English language conventions

Standard 7: LISTENING AND SPEAKING: skills, strategies, and applications

The standards are broad statements of what students are expected to learn. More specific indicators lie beneath each standard.

English/Language Arts Academic Standard Example	
Grade 9, Standard 6 WRITING: English Language Conventions	
Grammar and Mechanics of Writing	
9.6.1	Identify and correctly use clauses, both main and subordinate; phrases, including gerund, infinitive, and participial; and the mechanics of punctuation, such as semicolons, colons, ellipses, and hyphens.
9.6.2	Demonstrate an understanding of sentence construction, including parallel structure, subordination, and the proper placement of modifiers, and proper English usage, including the use of consistent verb tenses.
Manuscript Form	
9.6.3	Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
9.6.4	Apply appropriate manuscript conventions - including title page presentation, pagination, spacing, and margins - and integration of source and support material by citing sources within the text, using direct quotations, and paraphrasing.

K - 8 Mathematics Standards for the 2004 GQE Testing (Class of 2007)

Standard 1: Number sense
Standard 2: Computation
Standard 3: Algebra and functions
Standard 4: Geometry
Standard 5: Measurement
Standard 6: Data Analysis and probability
Standard 7: Problem solving

K - 8 Mathematics Academic Standard Example	
Mathematics, Grade 8, Standard 6 Data Analysis and Probability	
Students collect, organize, represent, and interpret relationships in data sets that have one or more variables. They determine probabilities and use them to make predictions about events.	
8.6.1	Identify claims based on statistical data and, in simple cases, evaluate the reasonableness of the claims. Design a study to investigate the claim.
8.6.2	Identify different methods of selecting samples, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each method, and the possible bias in a sample or display.
8.6.3	Understand the meaning of, and be able to identify or compute the minimum value, the lower quartile, the median, the upper quartile, the interquartile range, and the maximum value of a data set.
8.6.4	Analyze, interpret, and display single- and two-variable data in appropriate bar, line, and circle graphs; stem-and-leaf plots; and box and whisker plots and explain which types of display are appropriate for various data sets.
8.6.5	Represent two-variable data with a scatterplot on the coordinate plane and describe how the data points are distributed. If the pattern appears to be linear, draw a line that appears to best fit the data and write the equation of that line.
8.6.6	Understand and recognize equally likely events.
8.6.7	Find the number of possible arrangements of several objects by using the Basic Counting Principle.

The standards are broad statements of what students are expected to learn. More specific indicators lie beneath each standard.

Algebra Standards for the 2004 GQE Testing (Class of 2007)

Standard 1: Operations with real numbers

Standard 2: Linear equations and inequalities

Standard 3: Relations and functions

Standard 4: Graphing linear equations and inequalities

Standard 5: Pairs of linear equations and inequalities

Standard 6: Polynomials

Standard 7: Algebraic fractions

Standard 8: Quadratic, cubic, and radical equations

Standard 9: Mathematical reasoning and problem solving

The standards are broad statements of what students are expected to learn. More specific indicators lie beneath each standard.

Algebra I Academic Standard Example	
Algebra I, Standard 3 Relations and Functions	
Students sketch and interpret graphs representing given situations. They understand the concept of a function and analyze the graphs of functions.	
A 1.3.1	Sketch a reasonable graph for a given relationship.
A 1.3.2	Interpret a graph representing a given situation.
A 1.3.3	Understand the concept of a function, decide if a given relation is a function, and link equations to functions.
A 1.3.4	Find the domain and range of a relation.

Web sites that can provide you with more information include:

ISTEP+ Info Center:
www.doe.state.in.us/istep

Indiana Academic Standards:
www.doe.state.in.us/standards

Indiana State Board of Education:
www.doe.state.in.us/stateboard

Indiana's Education Roundtable:
www.edroundtable.state.in.us

Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress (ASAP):
www.doe.state.in.us/asap

Spanish versions of these document are available online:
www.doe.state.in.us/publications

Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR):
www.istar.doe.state.in.us

For more information, contact the
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